

Dear AERONET:

A good friend of mine and our AERONET community, Francois Lavenu, died February 10 2007 in Bamako, Mali. Francois worked for CESBIO/CNES in Toulouse, France. I first met Francois in Paris in 1991 as he, Didier Tanre, J-P Buis and I were trying to work out how the instrument would operate and the network come together. Francois was furiously writing a proposal called 'PHOTONS' and had plans for deployments in West Africa where his passion drove him to spend much of his career. Without that first proposal, the AERONET landscape would be very different. Francois can only be described as passion. He literally drove fast, drove hard, cajoled, joked, convinced and ultimately would sweep everyone with him. He had great insight and instincts that enabled all of us. The last time I saw Francois was in Spain at the AERONET meeting hosted by INTA in 2004. His passion was undiminished, at dinner his jokes were big and inclusive and we all loved it. He would always speak to me in French first then with feigned dismay and humor repeat it in half French and half English. I could usually get it, at least so I thought. He was instrumental in PHOTONS presence and participation in the African Monsoon Measurement and Analysis campaign. Probably he was in Mali attending to his Agoufou site. 'Merci beaucoup' man, it's working fine.